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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3854th meeting of the Security Council, held on 13 February 1998 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Croatia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council welcomes the successful completion of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), as described in the report of the Secretary-General of 22 January 1998 (S/1998/59). The experience of this multifunctional operation may be useful for similar situations in the future.

"The Security Council commends the commitment shown by the Government of the Republic of Croatia to the implementation of its comprehensive programme of national reconciliation, and stresses the need for continued progress in this regard. The Council is also encouraged by signs of increasing participation in Croatian political life by the region's ethnic Serb citizens, and underlines the importance of continued efforts by the Government of the Republic of Croatia to ensure full participation by the Serb minority in the political life of the country, including through urgent funding of the Joint Council of Municipalities.

"The Security Council notes that, despite the positive conclusion of UNTAES and the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, including its request for the establishment of the civilian police support group, much remains to be done. The Government of the Republic of Croatia remains responsible for the rights and safety of members of all ethnic groups within the Republic of Croatia and bound by its obligations and commitments under the Basic Agreement on the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (S/1995/951) and other international agreements. In this regard, the Council calls upon the Government of the Republic of Croatia to intensify its efforts to promote full reintegration of the region, in particular to resolve property issues and other problems which are hindering the return of refugees and displaced persons, to protect human rights, including by taking action against harassment, to

address in full uncertainties about the implementation of the Amnesty Law and to take measures to improve public confidence in the Croatian police.

"In this context, the Security Council emphasizes the key role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) throughout the Republic of Croatia, including in the Danubian region. The Council strongly supports the closest possible cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE, in particular between the OSCE mission and the support group and other United Nations offices and agencies in the Republic of Croatia as envisaged by the Secretary-General, and, to that end, encourages the support group and the OSCE mission to keep each other fully informed.

"The Security Council pays tribute to the dedicated men and women of UNTAES, and, in particular, expresses its appreciation to the Transitional Administrators and the Force Commanders for their leadership of the UNTAES mission."